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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9514
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE 0224
RUEHBN/AMCONSUL MELBOURNE IMMEDIATE 5227
RUEHPT/AMCONSUL PERTH IMMEDIATE 3509
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STATE FOR EAP, USAID AND SES-O

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SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA ANNOUNCES AID PACKAGE FOR BURMA

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel A. Clune. Reasons: 1.4 (b),(d)

¶1. (U) Foreign Minister Smith announced May 7 that Australia would provide AUD 3 million (USD 2.84 million) in humanitarian aid to Burmese victims of Cyclone Nargis. The package includes up to AUD 1 million (USD 0.94 million) for Australian NGOs with capacity on the ground to provide immediate emergency shelter, water, water purification, cooking utensils, bedding, tarpaulins and sanitation assistance. Another AUD 1 million would be provided through the UN World Food Program for essential food staples, such as rice. The final AUD 1 million would be provided through UNICEF for water purification and sanitation. Smith later clarified that Australian aid agencies with capacity on the ground in Burma included CARE, World Vision and Caritas.

¶2. (U) In his press release, Smith said Australian aid would be concentrated in and around Rangoon, the area hardest hit by the cyclone. The release noted that Australia did not have a bilateral aid program in Burma and would not provide any assistance to the Burmese regime, instead would work through credible international organizations, including multilateral and international NGO aid partners who are positioned to provide immediate and targeted assistance to the most vulnerable people.

¶3. (U) FM Smith called on the Burmese regime to ensure speedy access to aid agencies able to render emergency humanitarian assistance.

¶4. (C) Gary Quinlan, Senior Advisor on International Affairs to the Prime Minister, told the Deputy Chief of Mission on May 7 that the GOA was encountering problems with the Burmese authorities in securing approval for entry of relief supplies. The Australian Permrep in New York had convened a meeting of interested parties, including the Burmese Permrep, to discuss the issue, but without resolution. Quinlan said the Burmese Permrep's "heart was in the right place" but he was unable to generate a response from Rangoon. As Quinlan was recounting this to the DCM, he took a call from World Vision Australia Director Tim Costello, who complained he was unable to get Burmese permission to fly relief supplies into Rangoon from Dubai.

¶5. (SBU) Separately, DFAT Acting Director for Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Burma Kirsten Hambly denied local press reports that Australians were among the victims of Cyclone Nargis. As of COB May 7, the GOA was unaware of any Australian casualties in Burma. The Australian Embassy had reported

that known Australian nationals in and around Rangoon had been accounted for with no deaths or injuries, as least so far.

¶16. (U) Hambly noted that AusAID, the official Australian development agency, had one official and 2-3 locally engaged staff in place in Rangoon to assist relief efforts, supplementing the Embassy staff of six officers.

MCCALLUM